



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
Garey Bies
1ST ASSEMBLY DISTRICT
COMMITTEE ON CORRECTIONS AND THE COURTS

**Written Testimony of Representative Garey Bies
Assembly Committee on Tourism
Assembly Bill 422 – State Park Bus Pass**

Good morning Chairperson Kaufert and committee members, I appreciate the opportunity to submit my testimony in support of Assembly Bill 422, relating to annual state park passes for commercial motor buses.

I have introduced this legislation on behalf of the Door County Trolley that operates daily tours to Peninsula State Park. Currently, annual passes are not available for buses that operate to our state's parks. As a result some bus operators, like Door County Trolley, can rack up significant costs as each operating bus must purchase a daily pass. A representative from Door County Trolley is here to testify today and will provide a better illustration of how current law affects there business.

This legislation establishes an annual pass for motor buses to Wisconsin's state parks. Under Assembly Bill 422, an annual pass for a Wisconsin registered motor bus will cost \$299.50 plus 50 cents for the issuance fee for a total of \$300. A pass for each additional bus operated by the same company would cost an additional \$50. An annual pass for a bus registered by an out of state company will cost \$450 with \$50 for each additional bus under the same company.

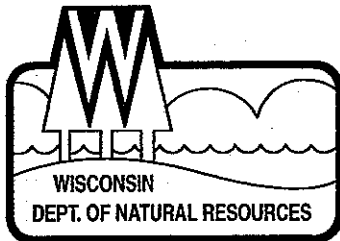
Assembly Bill 422 can be of great benefit to our small tour operators who are in the business of bringing visitors to our state's parks. Under current law the fees can be difficult for a small company to absorb and I respectfully request your support of AB 422 in committee.

Thank you.

First for Wisconsin!

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October 11, 2007

To: Members, Assembly Tourism, Recreation and State Properties Committee

From: Dave Borsecnik, Director, Bureau of Parks and Recreation

Subject: Assembly Bill 422

I am writing regarding Assembly Bill 422, which creates an annual vehicle admission receipt for motor buses entering state parks and other vehicle admission areas.

The Department of Natural Resources acknowledges and appreciates the contributions the tourism industry makes to the health of Wisconsin's economy, especially in areas where tourism is the primary source of jobs and income. The current fees for motor bus admission to state parks and forests are \$10/day for busses with Wisconsin license plates and \$14/day for non-resident motor busses. At that price, a current bus or trolley operator could bring 20 people into a park for a modest \$0.50 per passenger to enjoy and support Wisconsin's state parks.

It is this potential loss of revenue which prompts the Department to take a neutral position on AB 422. Currently, 76% of the state park system's operating budget comes directly from segregated fees; primarily the vehicle admission and camping fees now paid by visitors. The percentage of GPR funding for the Wisconsin State Park System has dropped to less than 24%. Historically, the state park system budget had been evenly balanced between GPR and user fees. In the 1995-1997 state budget, the statute requiring 50% GPR support for state parks and trails was eliminated. As a result, a shift in funding has occurred, placing a greater reliance on fees generated by park system users to keep the system open and operational. We are always mindful of this continued shift to park users when considering the impact of reduced park admissions.

We want to work with businesses that promote tourism and outdoor recreation options. The parks system does have a fairly thin budget, and we must be mindful of potential budget impacts, while also wanting to promote the use of our great park system.

In closing, it is critical that the state park system receives the funding it requested in the current state budget just to continue to operate the properties and facilities it has right now. It is my hope that we can continue to work together to maintain and enhance our state park system so current and future generations will have the opportunities that we value so highly.